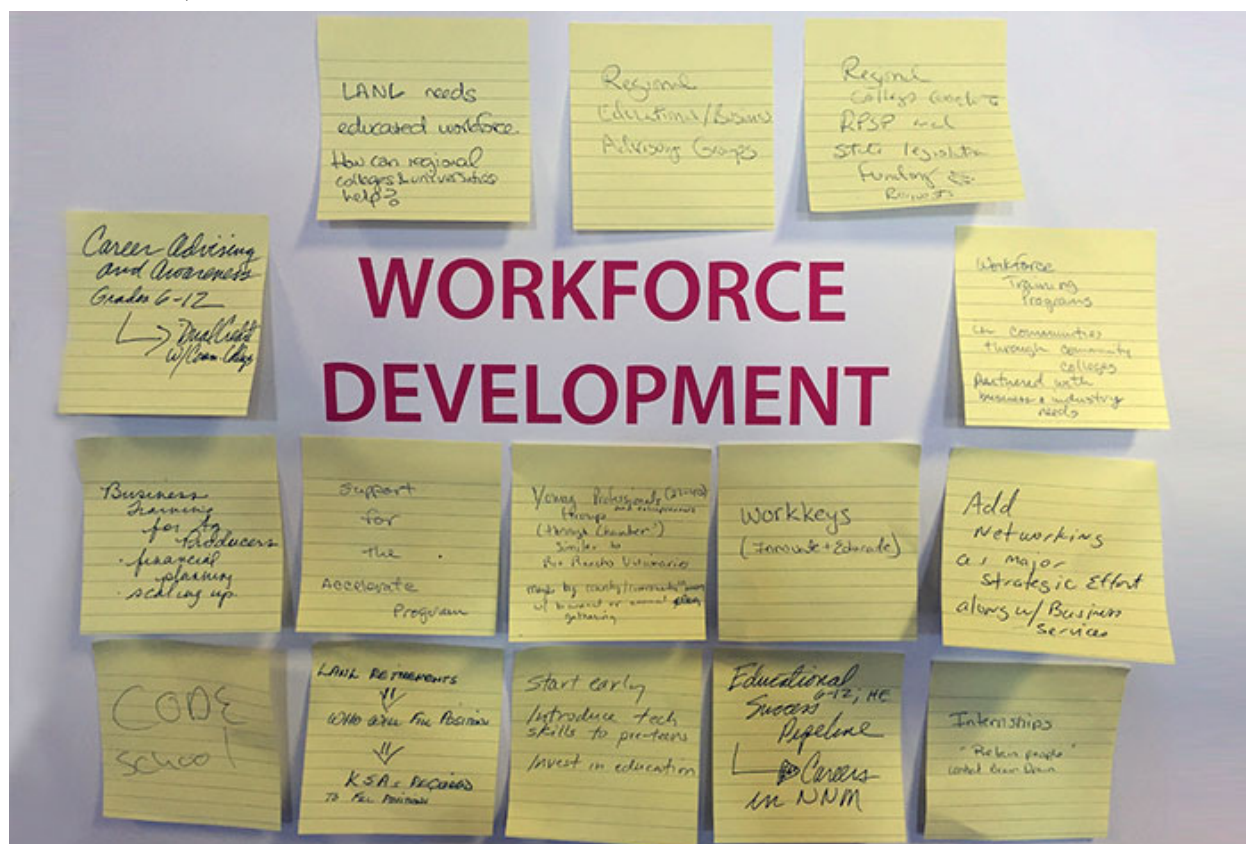


2015 REDI summit focuses on community sustainability

December 1, 2015



The Regional Economic Development Initiative's (REDI's) State of the Region Summit on November 2 began with Los Alamos National Laboratory's Community Programs Director Kathy Keith giving a recap of the REDI Strategic Plan, which was completed in 2008 and offers a long-term, 25-year vision for northern New Mexico.

REDI is a long-standing effort of Los Alamos County that involves public and private sector partners in strengthening and diversifying the region's economy.

Michigan State University professor David Ivan, a well-known expert on community sustainability and rural vitality, gave the keynote address and facilitated a working lunch afterwards.

Pillars of community success

Professor Ivan brought the results of his latest study, which included on-site interviews in more than 80 communities across 20 states, to the REDI discussion.

Community success, according to Ivan, is based on the following foundational ingredients:

- A community environment that supports innovation and entrepreneurship
- Strategic investments
- Quality of place
- Strong social capital
- Leveraging regional assets across different municipalities

The successful communities in Ivan's study intentionally focused on identifying and supporting entrepreneurs as they created and grew their businesses. The communities built on local talents, welcomed diversity and were open to experimentation and innovation.

The most successful communities also created strong social capital through networks that strengthened community bonds and involved children and young adults.

One of the ideas that stood out along this line was to provide disposable cameras to young people and ask them to take pictures of what they like and dislike in their community and then have the photographs discussed during city meetings.

Poverty data, local innovation

Kelly O'Donnell, an economist and public finance expert specializing in the interface between economic development and social policy, focused her REDI presentation on economic opportunity.

Suggesting that education is essential to economic success, O'Donnell underscored this point by comparing New Mexico's poverty rates with educational attainment. The highest percentage of New Mexicans living in poverty (33 percent) had less than a high school education, according to 2009-2013 U.S. Census Bureau data, while only six percent of those afflicted by poverty had attained a bachelor's degree or higher.

Micheline Devaurs from Los Alamos National Laboratory's Feynman Center for Innovation provided REDI participants with a brief overview of the many science and industry collaborations facilitated by the Laboratory.

The annual DisrupTECH events were just one of the many examples Devaurs mentioned. DisrupTECH's goal, Devaurs said, is to expose industry to potentially world-changing, early-stage technologies developed by Los Alamos scientists.

Laboratory scientists will explain their innovations on December 9, 2015, with a group of finalists then invited to participate in the DisrupTECH Launch, a series of coaching sessions from local investors and technology entrepreneurs. The coaching sessions will help participants hone their pitch before presenting in front of a panel of entrepreneurs, investors, regional leaders, policy makers and industrial partners during the DisrupTECH Forum in July 2016. Prizes will be awarded for "Best Overall Pitch" and "Most Fundable Pitch."

The REDI initiative is managed by the Regional Development Corporation in Española. The summit was sponsored by Los Alamos and Rio Arriba Counties; the City of Española; Los Alamos National Laboratory; and Los Alamos National Security, LLC. To learn more, visit the [REDI](#) website.

Community Connections features news and opportunities that grow out of the Laboratory's Good Neighbor Pledge: "To partner with our neighbors on strengthening math and science learning, diversifying the economy and expanding community giving in northern New Mexico."

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